

TIDE TOGETHER

A lakeside sanctuary gets a multi-family-friendly makeover with a nod to the past.

BY Suzanna Logan

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF
Deep River Partners

Although it's located just 30 minutes north of Milwaukee, the waterfront home feels worlds away. The sense of escape begins with a winding drive to the home. "You take this meandering natural drive going left and right through all these trees until you come out, and it's like 'Whoa! There is the lake,'" says architect Nick Mather. "The sequence of arriving at the house and the emotion that provides is really impactful."



ABOVE Paneled walls and trusses painted a creamy white, custom cabinetry featuring metal doors and acrylic infill panels and quartz and quartzite countertops across the connected prep and entertaining islands reflect the owner's desire for a fresh approach to the home's central gathering area.

Windswept and wild, the coast of Lake Michigan is a land of many moods shifting between scenes—quiet and serene; sunny and vivacious; stormy and dramatic. Having a front-row seat to this ever-changing theater of nature is the lucky lot of two families who, together, purchased an outdated cottage on the water and transformed it into a stunning lakeside escape.

Nestled between the pine forests and sandy dunes, the house is a true destination retreat—and arriving is part of the experience.

“To get to the house, you’re out on the loud interstate, then you go through this transition of pure calmness before arriving at the water,” says Nick Mather, senior project architect with Deep River Partners.

Creating a place to relax and reconnect drove the two-year renovation process—a team effort by the homeowners, Deep River Partners and general contractor Paul Driessen, owner of Timber Innovations. “The goal was to have a family retreat, a gathering place where they could leave the busy city behind and come together,” says Nick.



The furnishings are a mix of old and new, reflecting the owners' desire for interiors that strike a balance between woodland lake house and “a nod to the Hamptons — but not as preppy or formal,” says interior designer Natalie Erickson.

While the owners were eager to bring the nearly century-old home up to date with fresh finishes, before the aesthetics could be addressed, larger structural issues required repair. “When a house has been added onto over the years, the challenge of remodeling is that you open up the walls and find surprises,” says Nick. “In this case, we worked with our engineers to fix some questionable structural techniques to ensure the house could stand the test of time.”

Other significant changes included replacing all the original windows, altering the entry sequence to create a sense of place with an immediate view of the lake from the front door and focusing on the functionality of the main-floor layout for the two families.

“Because we had multiple people in a range of age groups, it was important that we had an open floor plan but also that we create little nooks and areas with a sense of intimacy and identity,” says Nick. “Whether you have two people up for the weekend or 30, the house never feels too big or too small.”

The private spaces also underwent a major transformation, with the second floor being totally revamped to create two separate family wings. (An additional bunk room and bathroom in the lower level add more sleeping space.)

An intentionally low-key vibe guided every change. “This is a place where shoes are coming off and people are running in and out from the beach,” says Deep River Partners’ senior interior



ABOVE LEFT Nick explains that the creation of little vignettes of “intimacy and identity” throughout the home, like the welcoming armchairs by the fireplace, was a guiding priority in the home’s redesign.

ABOVE RIGHT “The views are incredible,” says Natalie, who adds that showcasing the waterscape was a top design priority. To keep all eyes on the scenery, the walls were washed in Benjamin Moore’s “Moonshine,” an off-white with muted blue-gray and green undertones that play up the setting.



ABOVE Although now a study in serene design — “neutral, textural, calming, simple,” says Natalie — the home’s bedrooms weren’t always that way. “Both of the primary suites were completely gutted,” says Nick. “The lakeside suite had kooky angled walls and this weird bathroom situation. We wiped all that out and started fresh.”

LEFT This bathroom features a smart, multipurpose design with two separate spaces for increased usability. “There is a separate vanity and tub room, along with a shower and toilet room, which allows more than one person to use the bathroom at once,” says Nick.



The home leans into natural materials inside and out. Cedar shakes and Ipe wood decking with metal posts and cable railings surround the exterior. “We chose things that could age and patina over time,” says Natalie. “It fits nicely with the lake, the trees, the dunes — it really does feel like it has always been there.”

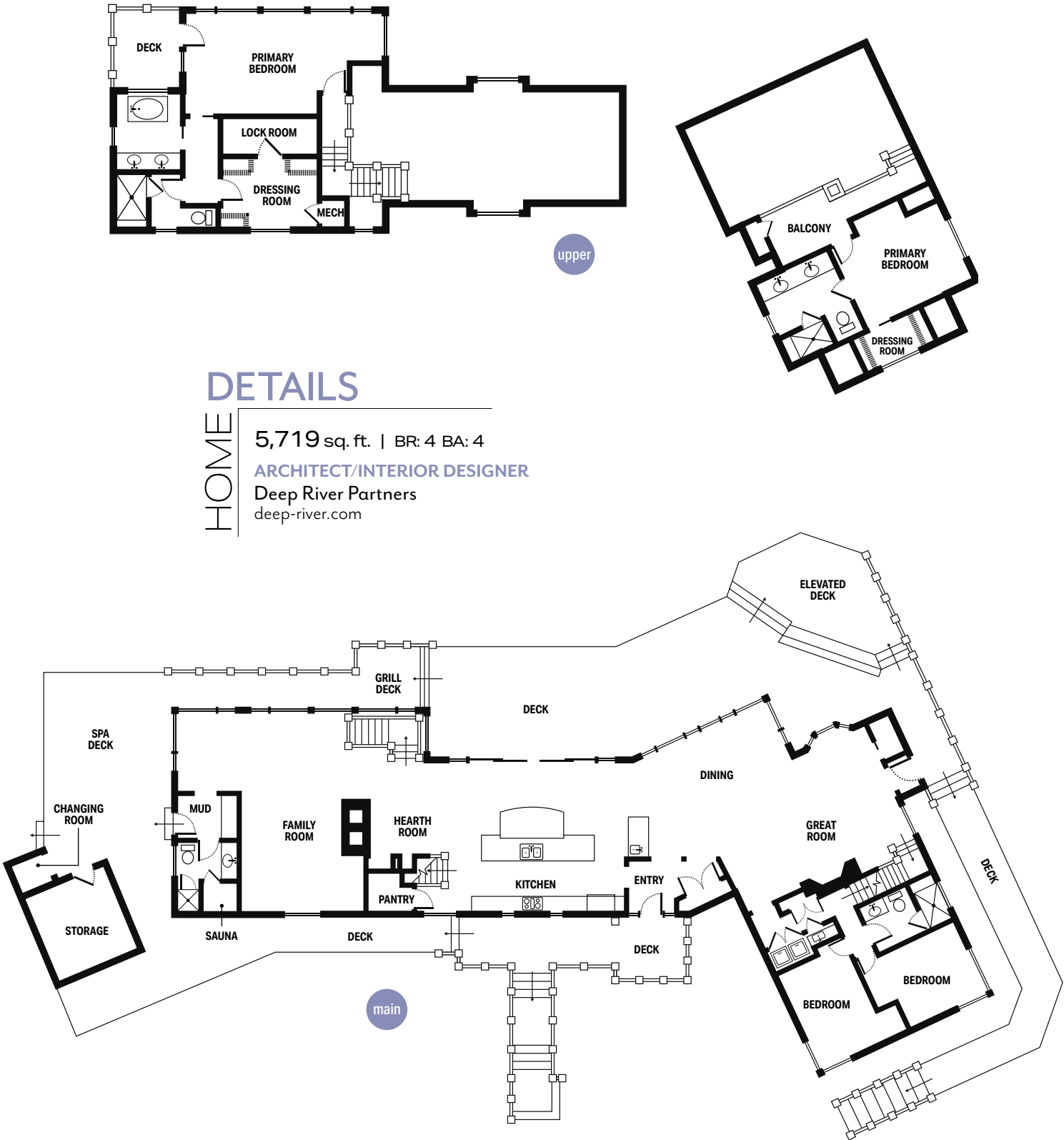
designer Natalie Erickson. “It needed to be comfortable, casual and welcoming.”

Through the remodel process, the team was careful to preserve the home’s vintage vibe. “Maintaining elements of that original cabin style was really important to them,” shares Paul. “We kept a lot of the woodwork and stone and just cleaned it up.”

In particular, the family room exudes a warm, woodsy lakeside feel with its stone fireplace and original timber elements, including tongue-and-groove pine ceilings and a network of decorative dark-toned beams. “The timbers were somewhat

simple, so we brought in additional timbers to complete that truss look and make it more structurally accurate,” explains Paul. The beams spanning the kitchen were also built out and updated with a pickling gloss “so you can still see the knots and grain texture,” he says.

The layers of history that still emerge through the new design speak to the success of the renovation. “The house had a lot of existing character that the new homeowners wanted to preserve,” says Nick. “They saw the possibilities, the good bones of the home, and we were able to bring it back to life and freshen it up for them.”



DETAILS

5,719 sq. ft. | BR: 4 BA: 4

ARCHITECT/INTERIOR DESIGNER
 Deep River Partners
 deep-river.com